DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 219 782 CS 207 125

AUTHOR Jobe, Ronald A.
TITLE Literature in Translation for Secondary Students.
PUB DATE Apr 82
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English Spring Conference (1st, Minneapolis, MN, April 15-17, 1982).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Books; *Cultural Awareness; *English Instruction; Foreign Countries; Literary Criticism; *Literature Appreciation; Reading Materials; Secondary Education; *Translation; World Literature
IDENTIFIERS *Literature in Translation

ABSTRACT

Literature in translation can provide English speaking secondary school students with a sensitive glimpse into life in other areas of the world and can be a contributor to international understanding. In such stories as Anne Holm's "I Am David," or "The Hostage," the characters become involved in webs of adventure and play leading roles in the action. Many characters in translated novels are caught up in a web of realism, as are the characters in "My Brother Plays the Clarinet," and "The Secret of the Yellow House," two short stories by Anatolii Aleksin that are set in modern Russia. Books written by European writers, such as Otfried Preussler and Hannelore Valencak, frequently cloak their characters in a web of tradition, legend, or even superstition, while stories like "The Curse of Laguna Grande" by S. R. Van Iterson present a contemporary picture of rural South America. English speaking students can also gain much understanding for the reality and finality of war through books such as "Pack of Wolves" by Vasil Bykov and "A Little Girl Under a Mosquito Net" by Monique Lange. English teachers should refrain from a noninternational literary tradition and should introduce students to quality literature translated into English. (A bibliography of translated literature is included.) (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED219782

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

Dr. Ronald A. Jobe

University of

British Columbia

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ronald A. Jobe

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS207125

LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

What impact has translation on our lives and the lives of our secondary students? When we get sleepily out of bed in the morning and listen to the international news reports we do not consider that much of what we hear has been reported in a translated version. Our students do not fully realize the influence and importance of translators in the international news reporting scene.

It is noted that the Iranian situation is quiet temporarily but ready to fire off again, the Sinai reverted to Egypt, and El Salvador smoulders with spasmodic outbursts. International crises flare up, continue, become dormant, and only the scars of memories remain. Recent headlines and cartoons have, as the one in the Vancouver Sun, directed our attention to areas of conflict, disasters, and war. This has specifically been the case with the Falkland Islands. As a result, we know more about this archipelago than most of us realized was possible. Our schools have not spent any amount to time teaching about these islands except perhaps

LIMITED ENGAGEMENT

$100 MILLION PRODUCTION OF

MARGARETA

FEATURING

DON'T ANNEX ME ARGENTINA !

"...advanced intelligence..."
The Times & The Telegraph

"...aggressive!"
Tass

"...it got me moving..."
Alex Haig

"Wot...?"
Lord Carrington

NOW PLAYING IN **PARLIAMENT**

REDUCED RATES FOR SERVICEMEN AND Falkland Islanders

NEXT WEEK
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

for history courses discussing the influence of Cape Horn on the West Coast of North America or an occasional reading of'Two Years Before the Mast' Their image was one of an isolated wilderness.

It is rather amusing to note the plight of a young Vancouver family who, after careful examination of global regions, determined that the most likely place where one could survive the effects of war, particularly of a nuclear holocaust, would be the Faulkland Islands. Seven months after they arrived, ...Guess who's coming to dinner?

Since the April 2 military takeover the media have gone wild speculating about the forthcoming conflict to free the 1800 inhabitants. The only question remains...when will the Empire strike back? Each day new headlines promote the latest developments in this minor league duel. "Too Late To Stop Battle Now," "Britons Seek a Dubious Camelot," "Argentine Fleet Reportedly Sets Sail." This is humorous, if it weren't for the serious consequences.

Two countries, each in a serious economic quagmire attempt to uphold their dignity, honor, and prestige. An opportunity to shift the national focus away from inflated economic realities and keep interest rates climbing ever higher.

Few people are personally aware of the impact of translation in this political situation. What is the real name of this archipelago---the Falkland Islands or the Malvinas? What actually happened here? Was it a military invasion, a violent seizure, a liberation, a regaining of the archipelago, a peaceful take over, or a natural annexation? The view that is held may have been determined by one's source of information. To which side does on listen in this argument? What will happen next? Will there be a withdrawal, a battle, a negotiated settlement, a mediated treaty, or will the answer ignore translated verbiage and rest in bloody defeat?

Conflicts occur among people, leaders, and ideologies which hold differing views , attitudes, or misunderstandings about the beliefs, values, and priorities of others. How do we know the position of the Argentine Military junta? Obviously it is only through translated statements made by their leaders. In any global crisis translators play the significant role of establishing communication channels for peace. Great demands are placed on them to ensure precision, accuracy, correctness and specificity of both language and meaning. Yet how easily misunderstandings, confusions and erroneous interpretations can appear.

How do our students, along with those on the Falkland Islands, gain an understanding of the humaneness of the Argentine peoples? Obviously one way is through what they see on television. Why else would the Argentine army be giving free television sets to the islanders? More importantly insight into other cultures can be gained with less violent action through the reading of books. In 1977 Argentina produced 641 children's books, yet few of these have been translated into English for our students to read. Literature in translation provides English-speaking students with a comprehension and understanding of life styles other than their own. To walk in a character's shoes, to view or listen to events through his or her eyes and ears allows for the development of empathetic feelings and sensitivities toward others. Literature then becomes a true bridge of international understanding.

Never before in our world's history has the need been greater for our secondary students and ourselves to gain a view of the other side. It is dangerous for our schools to continue an international isolationism trend in literature programs.

We as professionals have an urgent mission in life---to reach our young adults and share with them insights into the commonality of experiences, hopes, desires and frustrations which are experienced by all peoples. If young people are not travelling to other countries themselves, then we must arrange to do it for them by booking their encounters.

In recent years we have experienced an increase in the number of books translated into English which give our secondary students a sensitive glimpse into life in other areas of the world. Frequently the author's technique is to let thereader view life in these diversified situations through the eyes of the characters. The intensity of the character portrayal frequently determines the success of the story for secondary-student readers. It is only when students are able to subtly realize that these individuals face the same or even worse problems than they do that barriers begin to fall and become replaced by a sense of the universality of mankind. This sense of oneness amongst peoples is a major contribution being made through the translation of literature into English.

Books in translation are made memorable mostly because of the uniqueness, appeal, and credibility of the characters. Authors spin webs of adventure in which the characters become involved and play leading roles. The degree to which they are able to do this frequently determines the success of the plot.

"Suddenly the name David means so much more to me." Such a statement reflects one student's reaction after reading Anne Holm's I Am David(North to Freedom). This sensitive rediscovery of life concerns a boy in a concentration camp who was given only 30 seconds to escape over the electric barbed-wire fence while the power was cut off. What a decision for a boy to have to make, but he did and his survival as he escaped south through war-torn Germany to Italy and onto Denmark makes for powerful reading. Student readers will gain much insight into the significance of their own personal lives through David's discovery of trust and love in other people.

Anne Holm's ability to inspire thoughtful observations and actions from her characters is also reflected in The Hostage. Christopher finds out that

there are disadvantages to being the Danish Prime Minister's son, especially when a political opponent decides to undertake kidnapping as the only way to influence the Danish withdrawal from NATO. The issue gets considerably more complicated when a reactionary terriorist group takes over. The political opponent's son is also held captive and the boys gradually realize that in this disintegrating situation they have to make a choice: escape or die! The opposing beliefs of the boys and those involved in the kidnapping allows the reader to gain a glimpse into the psychological dilemma faced by the captors and those caught by such misguided actions. These views lead to a realization that there is no victory for anyone in a hostage-taking situation.

Many of the characters involved in translated novels are caught up in a web of realism. Modern Russia is the setting for two short stories by Anatolii Aleksin. In My Brother Plays the Clarinet, the 14-year-old sister Zhenya tries to arrange her brother Dima's life for him. Zhenya's long term plans to devote her life to her brother's career are suddenly shattered as he does not appreciate her protective actions. Sergei in the second story, "The Secret of the Yellow House," becomes aware of his father's first wife quite by accident. He musters up the courage to visit her, finds out that she is a doctor who is experiencing increasingly poor eyesight, and eventually becomes friends with her. Together

they enjoy going to adult movies and talking rather than becoming involved in an active sporting pace much preferred by his keep-fit parents.

What does a working mother do when she has to work on the night shift? Hire a night daddy of course! Maria Gripe (The Night Daddy) creates amusing episodes of a young Swedish man with his pet owl who comes to look after a teen-aged girl. Julia develops a direct, humorous yet warm friendship with this eccentric young man as they share their feelings, wonderings, and activities. Julia experiences a good deal of security and understanding even if her mother does work as a nurse at night, yet other Swedish girls are portrayed in even more traumatic situations. Gunnel Beckman's Mia, The Loneliness of Mia, and Mia Alone is a series of intense introspections by an older teen-aged girl of her life which seems to be falling apart since her parent's divorce. Gradually she survives a break up with her boyfriend and comes to realize that she is able to cope with the situation. A rather touching moment transpires when she recognizes how much her grandmother means to her.

Some of the most memorable of the characters which appear in books in translation are located in webs of locale which have a truly foreign flavour for English-speaking

readers. Such a character is a 15-year-old street urchin, nicknamed the flea, who exists in Bogata. Pulga(Van Iterson) is a convincing comment on the poverty of this Latin American country, yet shares the sense of kindness and caring which is also present. The young boy survived because a sympathetic truck driver took him on as his helper and he in turn helped to save the life of a kidnapped boy. Another young boy living in Ethiopia defies superstition and tradition in The Leopard (Bodker) when he sets out to hunt down the animal which is killing his cattle. Tibeso matures rather quickly after he finds out it was the blacksmith who was stealing the cattle: one does when one is left bound and gaged in a deserted village!

Books written by European writers frequently cloak the character in a web of tradition, legend or even superstition. The German writer, Otfried Preussler, is a grand master of intrigue as he pits Krabat, a 14-year-old beggar boy against the master of a mill (The Satanic Mill) which is really a school for dark secrets and black magic. Virtually a prisoner in this macabre setting, Krabat becomes the star pupil in his determination to escape. Although written in a seventeenth-century atmosphere the unusualness of the tension-creating episodes will tempt (bewitch) the reader.

Hannelore Valencak, an Austrian author, also captures the influence of legend in A Tangled Web with keen insight into realizing the effects of children's imagination on their lives and actions. Annie, constantly bullied by a classmate, boasted that she could perform a spell to stop the rainy weather and dry up a river in order to find the treasure under the old mill. When the rain did stop accidently her life became one of taunted misery. It was only after being threatened to be revealed as a witch and accused of starting a forest fire that she broke down and told what she had done. The relief she received for her foolish beliefs will be sighed aloud by the reader.

When Half-Gods Go (Valencak) enmeshes the reality of a teenage girl's visit to Greece with her moody boyfriend and the mysterious rendevouz with a handsome young man who looks just a bit too much like one of the statues she had seen in the local museum. Is it possible that statues of Gods can come alive? Readers will not only wonder but will look back at their own puzzling experiences with much interest.

The Curse of Laguna Grande (van Iterson) presents a contemporary view of rural Colombia, yet the powerful influence of supersitition on the actions of the people confronts a young lad as he returns to his family lands. Siny

Rose van Iterson's first sentence,

"Everybody in the valley knew;that was certain."

sets the mood for the novel and this is further enhanced by such comments as:

"So that's the way it is," they muttered

"Yes, that's the way it is."

"They're back."

Seven years after his father's mysterious disappearance, Carlos is back to find out what happened to him and to question why the old woman, Anna-Amanda, has such influence on the peasants.

Characters frequently become credible for contemporary readers despite being caught in the web of time. Suzanne Martel's The King's Daughter shares a 16-year-old orphan's delight at being sent to New France to create a new life. Jeanne's romantic inclinations receive a rude awakening when she arrives in Quebec and meets the man she is to marry. Jeanne's survival in the Canadian wilderness as the wife of a coureur de bois will provide readers with a realistic insight into the romance of the era. Another time sequence is splendidly captured by Greek writer Alki Zei's(The Sound of Dragon's Feet) skillful glimpse of prerevolutionary Russia.

This is reflected through the thoughts and actions of 10-year-old Sasha. She herself is allowed to see the inequities and injustices of Russian life at this time via the eyes, actions, and thoughts of her young socialistic tutor. Student readers will gain a valuable understanding of the period as it affected one person.

There can be no greater or more terrifying web for characters to be caught in than the web of war. English-speaking students can gain much understanding and appreciation for the reality and finality of war when they are able to read the books written by those directly involved whether as innocent victims or as one on the other side.

The haunting memory of war which lingers on is caught as an old Russian returns to visit the baby he saved thirty years before.(Pack of Wolves) The visit conjures up many memories of the terrifying events which surrounded his escape through German lines with his companions and the newly-born baby. Alas, Vasil Bykov withholds the actual reunion from our eyes as we only read of the old man tentatively entering the modern apartment.

Indo-China is an unusual setting for a Second World War story but Monique Langue in A Little Girl Under

A Mosquito Net probes deeply into a young French girl's existence there and her attitudes not only to the effects of the war but also of her personal life. Being Jewish she struggled with her identity and eventually turned towards Catholicism for solutions to her problems, but after a series of religious disillusionments in France she tossed out any form of religion.

Survival is a basic instinct for all mankind and no other book focuses on this theme quite as successfully as the account of The Cigarette Sellers of 3 Crosses Square. Joseph Ziemian details the care, concern, and caution shown by this group of Polish boys for each other. They exist only by stealing cigarettes in a famous Warsaw square yet their observant eyes and discretionate habits frequently allow them to transfer fleeing Jews to the underground.

What was it like to be in the army of the other side? Perhaps no author has said it quite so effectively as Hans Peter Richter does in the prologue to The Time of The Young Soldiers.

> When the war broke out, I was fourteen years old; when it ended I was twenty. I was a soldier for three years. I thought that the things I saw and the things I did were justified because no one spoke out openly against them.

Characters become involved in war activities on the other side in just the same way they do on our side. Students reading Richter's accounts of the wartime life of German youngsters will gain a realization that war unfairly affects everyone. No one escapes! There is no winner in war!

Believable characters caught in influential webs of setting, time, tradition, superstition or war reach out to individual readers and involve them in a grander web of understanding. Readers are able to view their own lives in a more realistic perspective having shared the lives of characters in books translated into English.

We as English teachers must refrain from our non-international literary tradition and introduce our students to quality literature translated into English. It will only be then that books will be a true bridge for international understanding. The view from the other side frequently becomes the same as ours!

LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

Ronald Jobe
University of British Columbia

Aleksin, Anatolii, My Brother Plays the Clarinet; Two Stories.
Translated from the Russian by Fainna Glagoleva.

Beckman, Gunnel, Admission to the Feast. Macmillan (London) 1971;
Dell, 1973. Translated from Swedish by Joan Tate.

The Loneliness of Mia. Bodley Head, 1975.
Translated from the Swedish by Joan Tate

Mia. Bodley Head, 1974.
Translated from the Swedish by Joan Tate

Mia Alone. Dell, 1978.
Translated from the Swedish by Joan Tate

A Room of His Own. Bodley Head, 1973
Translated from the Swedish by Joan Tate

That Early Spring. Viking, 1977.
Translated from the Swedish by Joan Tate

Bodelsen, Anders, Operation Cobra. Elsevier/Nelson, 1979.
Translated from the Danish by Joan Tate

Bodker, Cecil, Silas and the Black Mare. Oxford, 1978; Delacorte, 1978.
Translated from the Danish by Sheila La Farge (younger)

The Leopard. Atheneum, 1975
Translated from the Danish by Gunnar Poulsen, 1977
Batchelder Award Winner

Bykov, Vasil, Pack of Wolves. Crowell, 1981.
Translated from the Russian by Lynn Solotaroff

Chukovsky, Kornei, The Silver Crest; My Russian Boyhood. Holt, 1976.
Translated from the Russian by Beatrice Stillman

Ecke, Wolfgang, Be A Super Sleuth With the Case of the Invisible
Witness. (Invisible Witness-Am.) Methuen, 1980.
(Prentice-Hall, 1981)

The Face at the Window. Prentice-Hall, 1979.
Translated from the German by Stella and Vernon Humphries

Flight Toward Home, Macmillan, 1970.
Translated from the German by Anthony Knight.

Gripe, Maria. The Night Daddy. Delacorte, 1971
Translated from the Swedish by Gerry Bothmer.

Gutman, Nakum. Path of the Orange Peels: Adventures in the Early Days of Tel Aviv. Dodd, 1979. Translated from the Hebrew by Nelly Segal. Illustrated by the author.

Holm Anne, Hostage. Methuen, 1980.

I Am David. Puffin, 1969: (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965)
Translated from the Danish by L.W. Kingsland. (North to Freedom)

Korinetz, Yuri, There, Far Beyond the River. Chicago: Philip O'Hara. 1973. Translated from the German by Anthea Bell.

Korner, Wolfgang, The Green Frontier. Morrow, 1977.
Translated from the German by Patricia Crampton

Korschunow, Irina, Who Killed Christopher? Collins, 1979:
Philomel, 1980. Translated from the German by Eva Mayer

Kotowska, Monika, The Bridge to the Other Side. Doubleday, 1970.
Translated from the Polish by Maia Wojeciechowska

Kullman, Harry, The Battle Horse, Bradbury, 1981. Translated from the Swedish by George Blecher. 1982 Batchelder Award Winner.

Lange, Monique, A Little Girl Under A Mosquito Net. Viking, 1973.
Translated from the French by Patsy Southgate.

Lilius, Irmelin Sandman, The Sola Trilogy. Delacorte, 1980
Gold Crown Lane, Translated from the Swedish by Marianne Helwig Rogers
The Goldmaker's House, Translated by Joan Tate
Horses of the Night, Translated by Joan Tate

Lindgren, Astrid, The Brothers Lionheart. Viking, 1975.
Translated from the Swedish by Joan Tate

Linevski, A. An Old Tale Carved Out of Stone. Crown, 1973.
Translated from the Russian by Maria Polushkin.
1975 Batchelder Award

Martel, Suzanne, The King's Daughter. Vancouver: Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 1980. Translated from the French by David Toby Homel and Margaret Rose.

Matsubara, Hisako, Samurai. Times Books, 1980.
Translated from the German by Ruth Hein.

Ofek, Uriel. Smoke Over Golan. Harper, 1979.
Translated from the Hebrew by Israel Taslitt

Pelgrom, Els, The Winter When Time Was Frozen. Morrow, 1980.
Translated from the Dutch by Maryka and Raphael Rudnik.
1980 Batchelder Award.

Pesek, Ludek, Trap for Perseus. Bradbury, 1980
Translated from the German by Anthea Bell

Preussler, Otfried, The Satanic Mill. Macmillan, 1973
Translated from the German by Anthea Bell

Richter, Hans Peter, I Was There. Holt, 1972
Translated from the German by Edite Kroll

The Time of the Young Soldiers. Kestrel, 1976
Translated from the German by Anthea Bell

Ryss, Yevgeny, Search Behind the Lines. Morrow, 1974.
Translated from the Russian by Bonnie Carey

Simenon, Georges, Maigret and the Madwoman. Harcourt, 1972.
Translated from the French by Eileen Ellenbogen.

Ter Haar, Jaap, Boris. Delacorte, 1970
Translated from the Dutch by Martha Mearns

The World of Ben Lighthart. Delacorte, 1977. (Dell)
Translated from the Dutch by Martha Mearns.

Valencak, Hanelore, A Tangled Web. Morrow, 1978.
Translated from the German by Patricia Crampton

When Half-Gods Go. Morrow, 1976.
Translated from the German by Patricia Crampton

Van Iterson, S.R. The Curse of Laguna Grande. Morrow, 1973.
Translated from the Dutch by Hilda van Stockum

Pulga, Morrow, 1971
Translated from the Dutch by Alexander and Alison Gode.
1973 Batchelder Award Winner.

The Smugglers of Buena-Ventura. Morrow, 1974.
Translated from the Dutch by Hilda van Stockum

The Spirits of Chocamata. Morrow, 1977.

Von Staden, Wendelgard, Darkness Over the Valley, Growing up in Nazi Germany. Houghton Mifflin, 1981. Translated from the German by Mollie C. Peters.

Sei, Alki, Petros' War. Dutton, 1972. Translated from the Greek by Edward Fenton
The Sound of the Dragon's Feet. Dutton, 1979

Wildcat Under Glass. Holt, 1968.

Ziemian, Joseph. The Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square. Lerner, 1975. Translated from the Polish by Janina David.